

Summary of the Membership and Outreach Committee Teleconference September 29, 1997

The Membership and Outreach Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) convened by teleconference on Monday, September 29, 1997, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m Eastern Standard Time. The meeting was led by its Chair, Dr. Irene E. Ronning. The first part of the meeting was joint with two members from the Implementation Committee and Ms. Jeanne Mourrain, NELAC Director. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B.

Old Business

The minutes of the previous meeting, dated July 30, 1997, were not posted on the NELAC bulletin board, and therefore no review was possible. Mr. Mike Ciolek stated that he posted them this morning and they will be available as of 5:30 a.m , September 30, 1997.

New Business

- Model Legislation
- Governor's Letters
- Fact Sheets

Model Legislation

Model legislation from various states is available. Legislation may need to vary from State to State, but there are common elements. Dr. Kircher of the Implementation Committee discussed six common elements for enabling legislation:

- 1) rulemaking authority for writing certification requirements for standards
- 2) authority to operate
- 3) authority to collect fees to operate certification programs
- 4) authority to revoke limits or suspend certification for those not meeting the standards
- 5) ability to allow for 3rd party authority
- 6) authority to require certification for regulatory compliance work

He suggested that States incorporate NELAC materials, by reference, into rulemaking. This keeps from having to specify details in State rulemaking.

Some ideas for making this information available to States were:

- Contact Implementation Committee for draft copies
- Publish Dr. Kircher's phone number

The committee discussed other issues to be considered in legislation including the types of laboratories to be included, and EPA regulations (analytical requirements, approved test methods,...) affected.

This Committee may help distribute information to the States with a package including fact sheets and Dr. Kircher's information. The committee needs to consider what applies to the various laboratories, making sure that what is sent to a laboratory is applicable. A comment was made that a model quality assurance plan would be helpful--that the committee needs to provide some guidance.

Dual System

Some States may elect to keep their own program in addition to NELAC. Examples are Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. A comment was made that a dual system is not fair to the laboratories or industries. Phrasing: "Limited implementation of the NELAC program," was suggested.

Letter to the Governors, AAs/ RAs/ Department Secretaries

The following modifications were discussed:

- Add "as a voting member your representative must be engaged"
- No need to distinguish between NELAC II and III
- Last sentence, 1st paragraph: "State will have the opportunity..."
- 2nd paragraph, 8th line down: "please inform Ms. Mourrain of your decision...."

Copies may be sent to other people (e.g., regional administrators, last years representatives).

"Turn-around Letter"

Mr. George Mills led discussion on the turn-around letter, which will be simple--mostly check-off items and fill-in-the-blanks.

The following comments and ideas were discussed:

- Add telephone number? and fax? of designee (e.g. governor's agent)
- Print out name and address of previous representative and provide blanks for name/address of new representative
- Allowance for alternates?
- Letter to new representative, with acknowledgment of governor's letter
- For ready return: postcard, trifold, or envelope — Governor's office would probably prefer envelope

Dr. Ronning asked Ms. Mourrain whether NELAC could provide support for these types of bulk mailings since postage will be costly. Ms. Mourrain agreed to work with Dr. Ronning on this..

Industry Fact Sheets

It was suggested that the wording “where did NELAC standards come from...” should be changed. Also add some text explaining “why this is good for industry.”

It was pointed out that NELAC is quality assurance, not quality control. Suggested wording was:
“standardized quality control”
“NELAC specifies a standardized system of quality assurance. Among the elements of the quality management system...”

Comments included:

- Need to be clearer about NELAP as an EPA program
- How will multiple accreditations be managed?
- The issue is reciprocity
- The fact sheet should emphasize that industries want to use a National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) -accredited laboratory
- The scope should be clearer
- Let industries know that in the future there will be a database that industries can use to locate accredited laboratories
- Check tense -- right now everything is in future tense, and will have to be revised later as program is implemented

Benefits to industry are not apparent:

- consistency of rules for laboratories (across states)
- assure users of environmental data quality
- reduced cost
- ease of locating quality laboratories

Laboratory Fact Sheets

- The following ideas and comments were offered:
- Add something about benefits for small laboratories
- Most of it is not applicable to them, word it so that they don't feel overwhelmed
- They can choose to be accredited in the scope of their work
- It will hit the small laboratories harder
- Fees are an added burden
- It will be a disservice to the public if laboratories are allowed to operate under an exemption-- they must have an appropriate level of quality

The Committee expressed desire to convey the concept that NELAP accreditation is a goal.

State Accrediting Agencies Fact Sheets (Mr. Mike Sodano)

Mr. Michael Sodano led this discussion. Comments included:

- Don't use the term “dual accreditation system”
- Applies to all laboratories

- Be positive about NELAP for all concerned
- “requirements are appropriately-sized for the scope of work that laboratories are doing”
- Laboratories to be audited only once for each program

Since EPA will accredit the States, including performing the on-site assessment of the States, wording suggested was: “EPA will administer the accreditation of the States...”

States have the option to accredit laboratories for all or some programs under NELAP.

- 1) If a State will not accredit for a program then a laboratory can apply to other States.
- 2) If so, then States have option of performing their own assessments or by 3rd party assessment.

Application Forms

It was noted that no application forms are available yet. Interested persons should contact Ms. Mourrain. According to the Transition Ad Hoc Committee they should be available by October of 1997, and due by December 1, 1997.

Web Site

Mr. Ciolek briefed the committee on the status of the NELAC Web site. He stated that the conversion of the NELAC Web Site is planned for December. The change to the new Web site should be transparent to users. If a page no longer exists, there will be an icon for the user to click to take them to the new page. The current address is “<http://ttnwww.rtpnc.epa.gov/html/NELAC/NELAC.htm>” and the address in December will be “<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/nelac>” (called the TTN Web). This committee will get a chance to review the Web page before it is publicly available. WordPerfect 6.1 and PDF format will be available; HTML may also be available.

Some suggestions from the committee were:

- Break up documents
- Organize minutes by committee
- A description of committees first might help
- Keep graphics limited!
- Unpublished site for committees (chat room?) to be used for drafting documents, etc.

Mr. Ciolek also commented that he posts whatever Ms. Mourrain provides him. He does not reformat the documents. He stated that he needs some help with the formatting of documents for the Web page and will talk to Ms. Mourrain about technical support.

Conclusion

The Membership and Outreach Committee may have another teleconference meeting in November. Focus points will be:

- “dream” Web page
- bylaws and registration form (something in a draft form to vote on in NELAC IV)

Any assignments should be sent to Irene Ronning by November 17, 1997 (received by her around 11/20/97).

Action Items
Membership and Outreach Committee Teleconference
September 29, 1997

Item No.	Action	Date Completed
1.	Ms. Mourrain will check on the possibility of NELAC supporting mailings of this Committee.	
2.	Mr. Ciolek will discuss with Ms. Mourrain the possibility of support for document formatting under the planned Website organization.	

PARTICIPANTS
Membership and Outreach Committee Teleconference
September 29, 1997

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